

VZCZCXYZ0008
RR RUEHWEB

DE RUEHAM #0279/01 0271500
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
R 271500Z JAN 08
FM AMEMBASSY AMMAN
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 1617
RHEBAAA/DEPT OF ENERGY WASHINGTON DC
INFO RUEAEPA/HQ EPA WASHDC
RUEHDOI/DEPT OF INTERIOR WASHDC
RUEHRC/USDA WASHDC

UNCLAS AMMAN 000279

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE
SIPDIS

STATE FOR NEA/ELA, NEA/RA, AND OES
STATE PASS TO USAID
EPA FOR INTERNATIONAL
USDA FOR FOREST SERVICE/INTERNATIONAL
INTERIOR FOR INTERNATIONAL/WASHBURN

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [SENV](#) [ETRD](#) [EAID](#) [PGOV](#) [JO](#)

SUBJECT: MINISTER OF ENVIRONMENT DISCUSSES ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES WITH
MRS. BODMAN

REF: A) AMMAN 233
B) 07 AMMAN 3565

(U) SENSITIVE BUT UNCLASSIFIED. NOT FOR INTERNET DISTRIBUTION

1. (SBU) Summary: In a January 17 meeting with environmental attorney Diane Bodman (wife of Energy Secretary Samuel Bodman), Minister of Environment Khaled Irani provided a historical perspective on Jordan's environmental issues, the strong relationship of the government with environmental NGOs, the challenges of institution building at the young Ministry of Environment (MOE), and future MOE efforts to privatize management of medical, hazardous and domestic waste. Mrs. Bodman and Irani exchanged notes on inspections, licensing, and self-audit experiences from the U.S. Irani shared his views on the water crisis that faces Jordan, and thanked the USG for its continued and significant support to the MOE. End summary.

2. (SBU) In a January 17 meeting with Diane Bodman, wife of Energy Secretary Samuel Bodman (a former law professor and author of legal

SIPDIS
articles on environmental issues), Minister of Environment Khaled Irani praised the many facets of USG support for environmental issues over the years. In particular, he highlighted the USAID-supported "Wild Jordan" program where a scenic restaurant and meeting venue provide a lovely backdrop, while promoting conservation and sustainable development by helping local communities develop and sell their products.

3. (U) Irani, previously the Director General of the Royal Society for Conservation of Nature (RSCN), an environmental NGO with a long history of cooperation with the USG, also noted the strong tradition in Jordan for environmental NGO's such as RSCN to have government responsibilities, particularly in "green" issues such as bio-diversity and protected areas. NOTE: The MOE continues to have the lead on "brown" issues such as pollution prevention, waste materials management, licensing, and compliance. END NOTE. RSCN currently has the mandate for managing Jordan's protected areas and supporting eco-tourism.

Environmental Challenges, Inspections, and Audits

4. (U) A critical challenge facing the MOE is developing and institutionalizing the work of the young organization. Irani noted the recent focus on strengthening legislation, developing

appropriate organizational structures, setting up an inspection division, and supporting enforcement and compliance with the help of the Environmental Rangers (ref B).

15. (SBU) Irani welcomed Mrs. Bodman's suggestions that it would be advantageous for new industries to implement licensing procedures and undertake inspections upon start-up rather than bear significant costs to later retrofit their plants to satisfy regulations. As an example of such a challenge, Irani reported that the Zarka industrial area, classified as an environmental hot-spot, has seen 50 years of rampant industrial activity with no licensing; bringing those industries into compliance now will be prohibitively costly. Mrs. Bodman further highlighted that in the U.S., companies often undertake self-reporting based on internal audits. Rather than using the "stick" of criminal penalties, USG agencies often work with the company to develop a remediation plan. Irani responded that while environmental audits are currently not included in Jordan's environmental laws, the MOE gives Jordanian organizations six months for remedial action before imposing fines. NOTE: USAID has been promoting this approach through its work with Environmental Management Systems in key Jordanian industries. An environment award program was initiated in 2007 to recognize progressive firms. END NOTE.

Need for National Water Committee

16. (SBU) Noting that Jordan is the fourth driest country in the world, Irani suggested an annual debate on water use to allocate water resources - similar to the process for the national budget. In his view, such an open discussion would help reduce water use in agriculture, while promoting water efficiency. He also suggested a National Committee for Water be established, similar to the recently established National Committee for Energy.

Privatization

17. (SBU) Irani also reviewed for Mrs. Bodman efforts to privatize the collection and disposal of waste materials to limit pollution and increase conservation. He noted discussions with the Mayor of Amman on privatization of domestic waste management, and said that many private-sector organizations are interested in managing this process where at least 60% of the organic waste can be converted into methane, fertilizer or electric energy, while reusing glass, cans, and plastics. Irani estimated that landfill usage could be reduced by 95%, and commented that the proposal was under review by the cabinet and the Executive Privatization Commission. He added that the MOE is already in the process of privatizing the collection and disposal of medical and hazardous waste. NOTE: USAID had previously supported a medical waste facility at the Jordan University of Science and Technology which is run as a private enterprise. END NOTE.

18. (U) Secretary Bodman's party cleared this message.

Visit Amman's Classified Web Site at
<http://www.state.sgov.gov/p/nea/amman>

RUBINSTEIN